

**Willard Sherwood Center Statement, Council Member Tom Peterson
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Members of the community—

I want to take a moment to talk about how the Willard Sherwood project has changed, because I think there has been a lot of confusion about where this started—and where it is today.

Not long ago, the numbers associated with this project raised real concerns. We were looking at a combined impact that translated to about **9.7 cents on the tax rate**, and for the average homeowner, roughly **\$710 per year**.

That's not a small number. And it's no surprise that many residents reacted with concern.

Early last year I expressed concerns about these costs along with other Council members. Last October, three of us—myself, Stacy Hall, and Rachel McQuillen—voted against the land use application and made clear public statements about those costs.

That vote didn't stop the project—but it did send a very clear signal:
We needed to do better on affordability.

And to their credit, City staff redoubled their focus on cost controls.

What followed was not a redesign of the building—but a redesign of the financial approach. Staff went back, worked through the numbers in detail, refined operating assumptions, improved cost recovery, tightened financing, and worked with partners to reduce the burden.

And the result is a very different project.

Today:

- The tax impact has dropped from **9.7 cents to 4.33 cents**
- The average homeowner cost has dropped from about **\$710 to \$316 per year**

That's a reduction of nearly **\$400 annually per household**, and about a **55% decrease overall**

Just as importantly:

- Operating costs are now projected to **break even**
- And that's based on **conservative assumptions**, with potential upside

So, this is not about cutting corners.

This is about doing the work to make the project financially responsible.

I also want to be clear about something else—

These improvements did not happen by accident.

They happened because concerns were raised, questions were asked, and expectations were set.

That's how this process is supposed to work.

Now, residents deserve to understand this clearly:

The project before you today is not the same project that was initially presented.

It is more affordable.

It is more efficient.

And it reflects a real effort to reduce the burden on taxpayers.

At the same time, we are preserving the quality of the facility and making sure we are not creating a long-term liability or a facility that declines over time.

So, as we move forward, I think it's important to recognize both things:

Yes—there were legitimate concerns about cost.

And yes—those concerns led to meaningful improvements.

For those reasons, I will be voting in favor of this project tonight—**with the clear understanding that what we are approving reflects the importance of listening to our residents, exercising strong council leadership, and insisting on good governance that delivers better outcomes for the people we serve.**

At the same time, this experience underscores something even broader.

As a Council, we are looking ahead at a capital improvement program that exceeds **\$1 billion over the next decade**, including **more than \$520 million in just the next five years**. That is a significant responsibility for this body and for our community and an unprecedented level of investment since the origin of the City.

What this process has shown is that we cannot approach those investments passively. We need to review projects **proactively, responsibly, and objectively**—to determine which should move

forward as planned, which require modernization and improvement, and which may no longer make sense given current conditions, costs, and community priorities.

This is not about revisiting the past for its own sake—it is about applying discipline, transparency, and sound judgment to decisions that have long-term impacts on our residents.

Because ultimately, we do not simply inherit the decisions before us—we have a responsibility to **shape them**, to refine them, and when necessary, to rethink them.





That is how we ensure that our investments reflect the needs, priorities, and values of our community—both today and in the years ahead.


Thank you.

WILLARD SHERWOOD CENTER


STRONGER PROJECT. A LOWER BURDEN. A BETTER OUTCOME.

Through strong leadership, careful review, and focused effort,
we've delivered significant cost reductions for Fairfax taxpayers.

WHERE WE STARTED (Earlier Estimates)		WHERE WE ARE TODAY (Current Estimates)
 TAX RATE IMPACT 9.7 CENTS <small>Combined impact on tax rate</small>	TAX RATE IMPACT → -5.37 CENTS <small>(55% REDUCTION)</small>	 TAX RATE IMPACT 4.33 CENTS <small>Combined impact on tax rate</small>
 ANNUAL IMPACT ON HOMEOWNER \$710 <small>Per average homeowner</small>	HOMEOWNER IMPACT → -\$394 PER YEAR <small>(55% REDUCTION)</small>	 ANNUAL IMPACT ON HOMEOWNER \$316 <small>Per average homeowner</small>




REAL RESULTS. REAL SAVINGS.
Nearly \$400 less per homeowner each year and a tax rate impact cut by more than half.



IMPROVED OUTCOME.
Operating costs now projected to break even with conservative assumptions and potential upside.

STRONG LEADERSHIP. REAL ACCOUNTABILITY.
Last October, Council Members **Tom Peterson, Stacy Hall, and Rachel McQuillen** voted against the land use application and raised concerns about project costs. Their leadership helped drive the improvements we see today.



This transformation happened because we **LISTENED** to residents, exercised strong **COUNCIL LEADERSHIP**, and worked effectively with staff to deliver **BETTER OUTCOMES** for our community.

For you, Fairfax.
RESPONSIBLE STEWARDSHIP. STRONGER FUTURE.

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